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THE  
ARTS & CRAFTS OF  
INDIA & CEYLON

BY

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INDIAN CRAFTSMAN; ESSAYS IN NATIONAL  
IDEALISM; INDIAN DRAWINGS; ETC.

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## PREFACE

THE purpose of this book, like that of Professor Flinders Petrie in the same series, is to facilitate the understanding of the art it illustrates. It is intended for ordinary persons rather than for archæological specialists. The pages are not burdened with references; but no statement has been made without careful consideration or specific authority. The value of a small book must depend on its suggestiveness rather than on its completeness: but it must not be forgotten that what is here said is but a mere summary of a vast subject: each sentence could be expanded to a chapter, each chapter to a monograph. If the first chapters should appear long in proportion to those which describe the actual works, which are after all best described in the illustrations, it is because in order to account for Indian, just as for Gothic, "we have to account for its historic basis and for the whole atmosphere of mysticism, chivalry, and work enthusiasm, with all the institutions, romantic and social, which formed its environment" (Professor Lethaby, *Mediæval Art*).

The scope of the book is indicated in its title. Ceylon, from the standpoint of ethnology and culture, is an integral part of India. I have passed beyond the Indian boundary only to include the sculpture of Jāva and Cambodia, the most important of the Ind-

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ian colonies: I have not discussed either the architecture or the minor crafts of these countries, nor of Cambodia, Siam, or Burma, although Burma is now politically united to India. On the other hand, since the Himālayas are the natural boundary, the art of Nepāl, whence come so many fine works often described as Tibetan, is rightly called Indian.

That the work is divided into two parts, the first concerned with Hindū and Buddhist art, the latter with the Musulmān arts, is solely to facilitate an understanding of their historical relations and psychological development: I do not forget that in almost every art and craft, as also in music, there exists in Hindustān a complete and friendly fusion of the two cultures. The non-sectarian character of the styles of Indian art has indeed always been conspicuous; so that it is often only by special details that one can distinguish Jain from Buddhist *stūpas*, Buddhist from Hindū sculpture, or the Hindū from the Musulmān minor crafts. The one great distinction of Mughal from Hindū art is not so much racial as social; the former is an art of courts and connoisseurs, owing much to individual patronage, the latter belongs as much to the folk as to the kings.

It is indeed a most striking feature of Hindū and Buddhist civilisation that it produced not merely a

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great learning somewhat jealously guarded by pundits, but also a religious and æsthetic culture in which all classes shared. "Their ordinary *Plowmen* and *Husbandmen*," says Robert Knox, "do speak elegantly and are full of complement. And there is no difference between the ability and speech of a *Countryman* and a *Courtier*." Such is the natural fruit of feudal and theocratic cultures; a division into classes without tastes or interests in common is characteristic only of a large democracy.

The Hindūs have never believed in art for art's sake; their art, like that of mediæval Europe, was an art for love's sake. They made no distinctions of sacred and profane. I am glad to think that they have never consciously sought for beauty; just as none of their social institutions were intended to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. For great art results from the impulse to express certain clear intuitions of life and death, rather than from the conscious wish to make beautiful pictures or songs. The absence of beauty from art, or happiness from life, is an unanswerable condemnation of any civilisation in which they are lacking: yet neither beauty nor happiness is easily attainable if sought for as a primary end. Very often, as in India, they appear like angels unawares, just where the seeming

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rigidity of hieratic laws would appear to deny all personal freedom. We are forced to think that freedom has other than democratic meanings, and that art has little to do with personal self-expression.

Professor Lethaby has lately written that "If we (in Europe) would set seriously to work in reviving decorative design, the best thing we could do would be to bring a hundred craftsmen from India to form a school of decorative design." But it is well to remember, that if this is still true, it will not be true for long; for nearly every force at work and every tendency apparent in modern India is consciously or unconsciously directed towards the destruction of all skilful handicraft. Neither Nationalist nor Imperialist educators are concerned with that all-important part of education described by Ruskin as the cherishing of local associations, and hereditary skill. I could wish to persuade these teachers that education appears as much in doing as in knowing things —that craftsmanship is a mode of thought, for

All these trust to their hands:  
And everyone is wise in his work.

I am indebted to many friends for photographs, above all to M. Victor Goloubew (Nos. 1, 33, 37, 52, 60, and 63); also to the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington (Nos. 119, 139,

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156, 179, 180, 181, 182, 185, 188, 189, most of them taken expressly for this work), to Messrs Skeen & Co., Ceylon (Nos. 2, 13, 25, 26, 31, 34, 84, 85), to Mr E. B. Havell (Nos. 35, 36, 38), to Mr H. Parker (Nos. 16 and 45), to Mr W. Rothenstein (Nos. 93, 96), to Mr Justice Holmwood (No. 106), to Professor Tagore (No. 107), to Mr J. H. Marshall (No. 51), to Mr Vincent Smith (No. 17), to Messrs Johnston and Hoffman (Nos. 162, 163, 44), to the Director of the Colombo Museum (No. 6), and the Curator of the Lahore Museum (No. 143). The following are from negatives belonging to the India Office: Nos. 22, 23, 30, 32, 39, 79, 80-82, 87, 91, 142, 158-160, 164. The great majority of the remaining photographs have been taken by or expressly for myself. I am also grateful to many friends who have allowed me to photograph objects in their possession (see List of Illustrations). Three blocks are reproduced from Fergusson's *Indian and Eastern Architecture* by permission of Mr John Murray. I am indebted to Mr S. Hadaway, of the Madras School of Art, for the elephant on p. 200. For permission to reproduce Miss Larcher's two Ajantā tracings (Nos. 61, 62) I have to thank the committee of the India Society.

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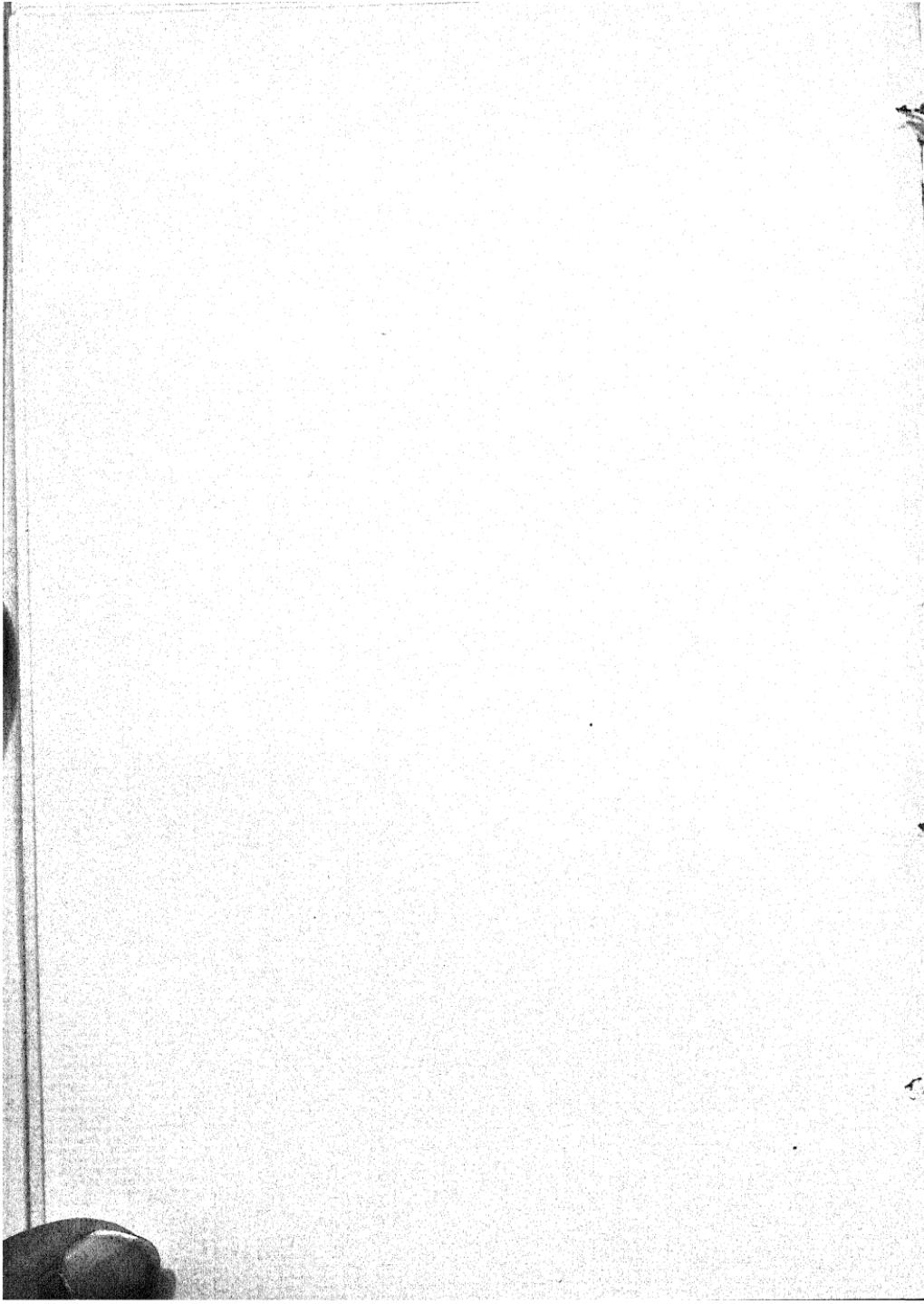
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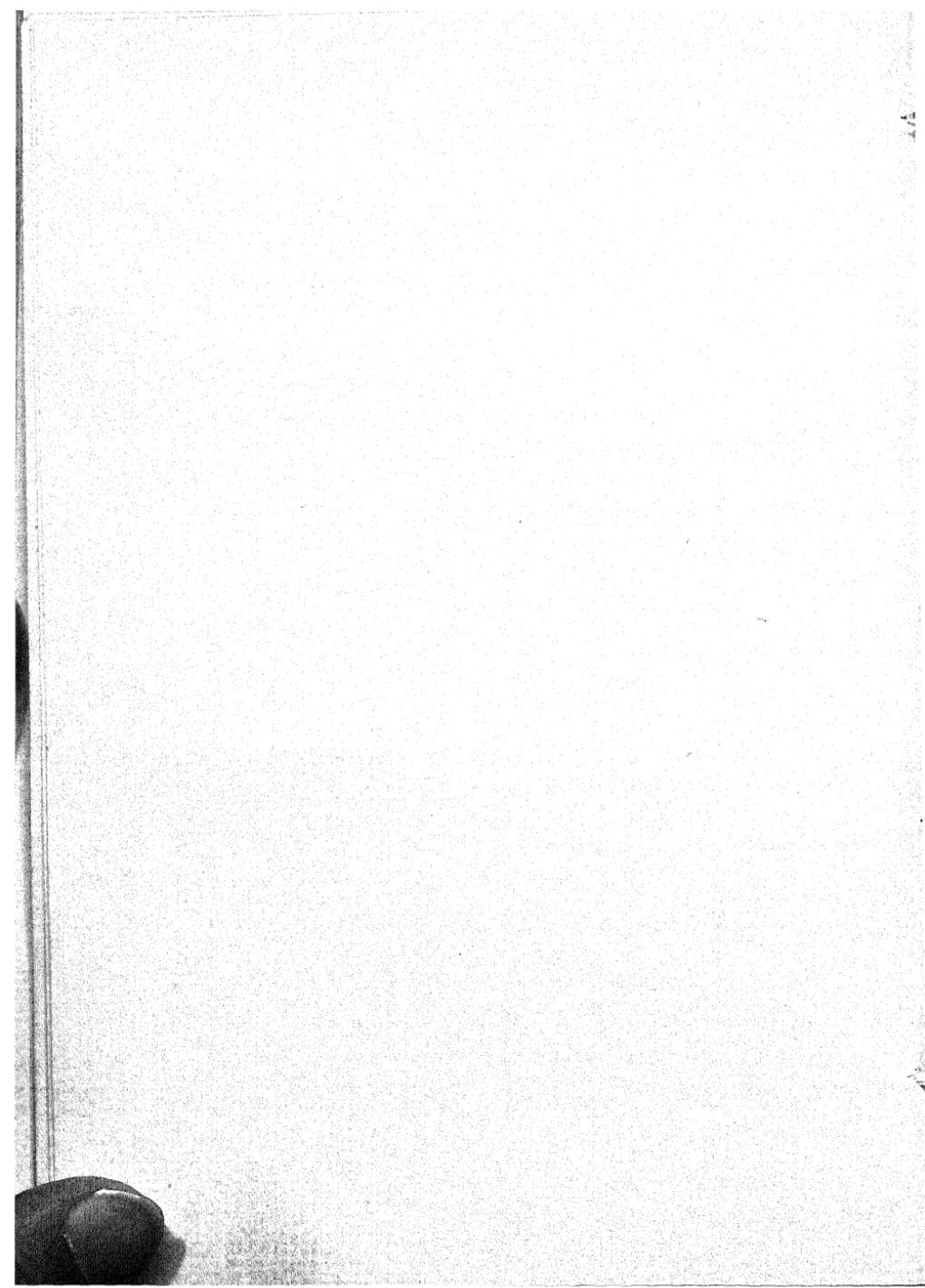
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PART ONE  
HINDU & BUDDHIST ART



CHAPTER ONE  
INDIAN CHARACTER & HISTORY



ARTS & CRAFTS OF INDIA & CEYLON  
BY ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY  
CHAPTER THE FIRST  
INDIAN CHARACTER AND HISTORY

THE OLDEST INHABITANTS OF INDIA are known to us by their stone and copper implements and pottery; they survive in the wild hill and forest tribes of many parts of India, and form quantitatively the most important factor in the origin of all those who are known now as Indians. Of the mainly non-Āryan Indians, the most important modern representatives are the Dravidians, especially the Tamils and Sinhalese, who already possessed a highly developed civilisation when the first Āryan teachers reached them, some centuries B.C. The origin of these Dravidians is not certainly known. Their language type is as distinct from that of the primitive tribes as it is from that of the Āryans: hence they may perhaps be considered as representatives of prehistoric immigrants rather than strictly aboriginal.

The origin of the Indian Āryans is also greatly disputed. All that it is necessary to know for our present purposes is that in early times the Indo-Āryans who heard the *Vedas* were settled in the Panjāb, the Land of Five Rivers. Their religious poems, the *Vedas*, are the oldest Indian scriptures,

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consisting of hymns, spells, and ritual ordinances, with traces of advanced philosophical speculation in the later works. The earliest hymns are probably older than 1500 B.C. The essential character of Vedic religion is the worship of the personified powers of nature, *e.g.* Sūrya (Sun), Varuna (Sky), Indra (Rain), Ushas (Dawn), and the more anthropomorphic conception of Yama (Death). A little later there appears a tendency to regard these names as representing the various manifestations of one Spirit, Ātman or Brahmā (neuter), variously personified as Prajāpati (Lord of Creatures), Vishvakarmā (All-fashioner), Purusha (Male), Hiranyagarbha (Golden Womb), and finally as Brahmā (m.).

By the time the Āryans had advanced further, and were permanently settled in the Middle Land of the Upper Ganges valley, there grew out of the *Vedas* the later religion of Brahmanism, on the one side elaborately ritualistic, on the other profoundly philosophical. The scriptures of this period (800 to 300 B.C.) are the *Brāhmaṇas* (ritual) and the *Upani-shads* (philosophy), forming the last part of the *Vedas*. The *Brāhmaṇas* are the service-books of the professional and hereditary priests, the Brāhmans. Great stress is laid on the importance of sacrifices and the use of magic formulas, known as *mantras*. These

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works are of much significance in the history of the arts: for the exact prescription of altar measurements may be regarded as the beginning of the *Shilpa-shāstras*, the ritual demanded the manufacture of lamps and sacrificial vessels, and the *mantras*, subsequently regarded as independent centres of consciousness, developed into personal divinities with images and ritual service of their own. The *Upani-shads*, with the later interpretations, constitute the *Vedānta* (Veda's end), the monistic philosophy which forms the background to all later Indian mythologies and interpretations of life. Two very important doctrines were generally accepted before the time of Buddha: *karma* (deeds), that every action bears inevitable fruit in this life or another, and *samsāra* (wandering), that individual souls pass from body to body in an everlasting wheel of experience. The *Vedānta* also maintains the illusory character of the phenomenal world, either as wholly unreal (*māyā*), or at least as necessarily misapprehended by finite beings, from whom all absolute truth is concealed by plural perception or ignorance (*avīdyā*). Salvation is liberation from this wheel of rebirth, and bondage of ignorance.

Side by side with this idealism grew up the historically only a little less important system of the

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*Sāmkhya*, which postulates an eternal dualism of soul (*Purusha*) and matter (*Prakriti*), without any deity. The founder of this system was Kapila, who if a historical person at all, certainly belongs to the ante-Buddhist period. An important element in *Sāmkhya* thought is the theory of the three *gunas*, or conditions of matter, respectively *sattva* (light, clear, intellectual), *rajas* (active, strenuous, emotional), and *tamas* (dark, gloomy, inert).

All the elaborate fabric of modern Hinduism is built up on these materials. Its development as a social and theological system continued throughout the Buddhist period, and up to the 12th century A.D., and in some aspects up to the present days of conflict between orthodoxy and modernism. The principal landmarks in this development are the *Yoga* system of Patanjali (ca. 200 B.C.); the epics (*Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*, old sagas handled by Brāhmaṇ poets some centuries B.C. with various additions, including the *Bhagavad Gītā*, up to 300-400 A.D.); the *Laws of Manu* (establishing the theoretical basis of the caste system); composition of the *Purāṇas* (mythologies, etc.); the decline and absorption of Buddhism (complete in most parts of India by the 8th century); the development of the southern theology of Shiva (4th to 10th century A.D.); and the

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rise of the northern cult of Krishna (2nd to 12th century A.D.). Each of these movements is of supreme importance for the history of art.

There are many phases of later Hindū thought, important for the student of art. The term *Ishvara* (Overlord) designates a supreme personal God, beyond whom is none but the impersonal and unknowable Brahmā or Ātman. *Ishvara* is worshipped in three aspects, as Brahmā (creator), Vishnu (sustainer), and Shiva (destroyer), sometimes united in one triple image (*Trimūrti*). The worship of Brahmā ceased at an early period; there remain two great Hindū groups or sects, the Vaishnava and the Shaiva. Each of these regard their own deity as *Ishvara*: yet, on the other hand, Vishnu and Shiva are often identified. Each of these has a feminine counterpart, or *Shakti* (Energy); creation and manifestation are effected by the interaction of these male and female principles of the cosmos. Vishnu has Lakshmī: Shiva, Pārvatī. The personality of each of these is manifold, each form having a different name. In particular, there are *sāttvic*, *rājasic*, and *tāmasic* forms, which may even be represented together in a single work of art. Some of these forms are those of non-Āryan deities absorbed into the Brāhman theology.

Other important sects are those of the Shāktas

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(who worship Shakti, the female cosmic principle), the Sauras (who worship the Sun), the Gānapatyas (who worship Ganesha), and the Sikhs (who combine the ideas of Islām with Hindū thought, and do not worship images).

Vaishnava theology is distinguished by its doctrine of *avatāras*, or incarnations. The ten *avatāras* of Vishnu are the ten forms assumed by him, for the establishment of righteousness when need arises. These incarnations are respectively, the Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Man-lion, Dwarf, Parashu-Rāma, Rāma, Krishna, Buddha, and Kalki (who is yet to come). The legends associated with all of these, but especially those of Rāma and Krishna, are frequently illustrated. Vishnu as *Ishvara* is named Nārāyana, and represented as reclining upon the serpent Shesha-nāga, who rests on the cosmic ocean: Brahmā is then born from a lotus that springs from Nārāyana's navel. The aspects of Vishnu are gracious and humanistic.

Shiva, though infinitely gracious in certain aspects, is a more terrible and inaccessible God than Vishnu. He is manifested in various forms, but does not assume a human incarnation. He is conceived best as the Dancer, whose dance is Evolution, Continuance, and Involution: also as the Great Yogi, chief

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of ascetics, absorbed in contemplation, or wandering through the Himālayan forests with Pārvatī and the bull Nandi. Shiva and Pārvatī have two sons, Ganesha and Kārttikeya, gods of wisdom and war respectively. Shiva is very frequently worshipped in the form of the *lingam*, a symbol partly of phallic origin, partly derived from the Buddhist *stūpa*, and generally associated with the *yoni*, or symbol of Shakti.

Vishnu and Shiva are Dionysic and truly spiritual powers, worshipped by those who seek salvation. Beside these, the Hinduism of the *Purānas* also recognises a group of Olympians, the *devas*, who are worshipped, if at all, for material benefits. These dwell in paradise (*svarga*): the chief of them are Indra (king of the gods), Varuna (Ocean), Agni (Fire), Sūrya (Sun), Chandra (Moon) and Yama (Death). The last presides over Hell. Kāmadeva (Desire), is the god of love. Vishvakarmā is no longer Brahmā, but a god or genius of the arts and crafts. Various sages (*rishis*) are associated with the *devas* as their priests. There are also in heaven other orders of beings, as *apsarās* (dancers), *gandharvas* (musicians), and *kinnaras* (bird-men and horse-men): and creatures who are "vehicles" of the gods, as Vishnu's Garuda, Pārvatī's Tiger, Ganesha's Rat, and Indra's Elephant.

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Vishnu and Shiva are worshipped by the Olympians, as by men, and also by devils. Set over against the *devas* are the devils, variously called *daityas*, *asuras*, or *rākshasas*, with whom the gods are frequently at war. *Nāgas*, or half-human serpents, dwell in the waters and underworlds.

None of these beings are eternal, but all, with men, animals, and the whole animate and "inanimate" creation, are part of the *samsāra*, the ocean of life subject to change. It is in Vishnu or Shiva that all these move and have their being. The demerit and merit of human beings are rewarded successively in Heaven and Hell in the intervals between births on earth. The great contrast between this exoteric system and the ultimate ideal of Hindū thought is well expressed in the saying, that "he who seeks emancipation should fear Heaven no less than Hell." But all forms of Indian thought unite in regarding *ahamkāra*, the sense of egoity or separateness from other living things, as the greatest of all delusions and the source of infinite sufferings.

So far we have postponed the consideration of Buddhism, on the ground that the Buddhist heresy, however important, did not even temporarily interfere with the development of distinctively Hindū modes of thought. The probable dates of Buddha's

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life are 563 to 483 B.C., the date of his death forming the first quite definite landmark in Indian history. Prince Siddhārtha, afterwards Buddha ("the Enlightened") grew up in the Brāhmanical tradition: he was impressed in early manhood with the problem of suffering: and leaving his royal estate, and independently of the priests, he sought a way of escape from the *samsāra*. As regards doctrine, he took for granted such theories as those of *karma*, and rebirth: he did not deny, but ignored the Olympians of the Brāhmans: he refused to discuss the origins of life, or to speak of things after death: he denied the theory of the *Ātman*, and laid great stress on the conception of life as perpetual change: he denied equally the efficacy of sacrifices, exaggerated asceticism, or prayer, maintaining that the true Path was that of personal morality and intellectual progress. He established an order of begging monks, who have maintained an honourable tradition to the present day in Ceylon and Burma: if he repudiated all unreasonable mortifications, none the less he sought to withdraw from the world as many as possible of the wisest and best of men, to lead a life of very considerable restraint. He could not help but look upon women and all the arts (as music and dancing, etc.) as snares from which men should en-

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deavour to escape. He made the sole end of life, salvation (*nirvāna*): a view contrasting with the Hindū conception of the four ends of life, viz. the practice of morality (*dharma*), the acquiring of wealth (*artha*), the satisfaction of desires (*kāma*), and progress towards emancipation (*moksha*). There is therefore some justification for speaking of Buddha's system as puritanical. His influence on all later Hindū thought is due largely to the power of his own magnetic and gracious personality, and to the essential value and moderation, rather than to the originality, of his teaching. But Buddhism became, and must have become, something more than the philosophy of Buddha, before it could inspire a great religious art such as that of Ajantā or Borōbodur.

Early Buddhism (*Hīnayāna*, the "Lesser Vehicle") was soon modified by the mythologising tendency of Indian thought, from the 2nd century B.C. onwardsevolving an elaborate theology (*Mahāyāna*, the "Great Vehicle"), closely corresponding to that of the Hindūs. The chief god-types are the Saviours or Future Buddhas (*Bodhisattvas*) and their *Shaktis* or female Energies. There are likewise imagined *Dhyāni* (rapt) Buddhas, of whom the earthly Buddhas are but a mirage or projection—a doctrine similar to that of the *avatārs*. Ultimately these ex-

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hibit placid, stern, and fierce forms like those of the Hindū deities. By the 8th century A.D. Mahāyāna Buddhism had partly fused with and partly been replaced by Hindū theologies in most parts of India: but it survived in Bengal and Orissa until the 13th century or later, and in its most mystic, *Tantric* form, up to the present day in Nepāl, and in orthodox forms, in Ceylon.

Early Buddhism was carried to Ceylon in the time of Asoka (2nd century B.C.) and has remained to this day the religion of the Sinhalese. During the first six centuries A.D. it was taken, in the Brāhmanised Mahāyāna form, to China, where a great Buddhist art developed on Indian lines; in the 8th century it went with Indian colonists to Jāva, where are to be seen some of the finest works of Buddhist art in existence. Somewhat later, Buddhist and Hindū art and thought were equally firmly established in Burma, Siam, and Cambodia.

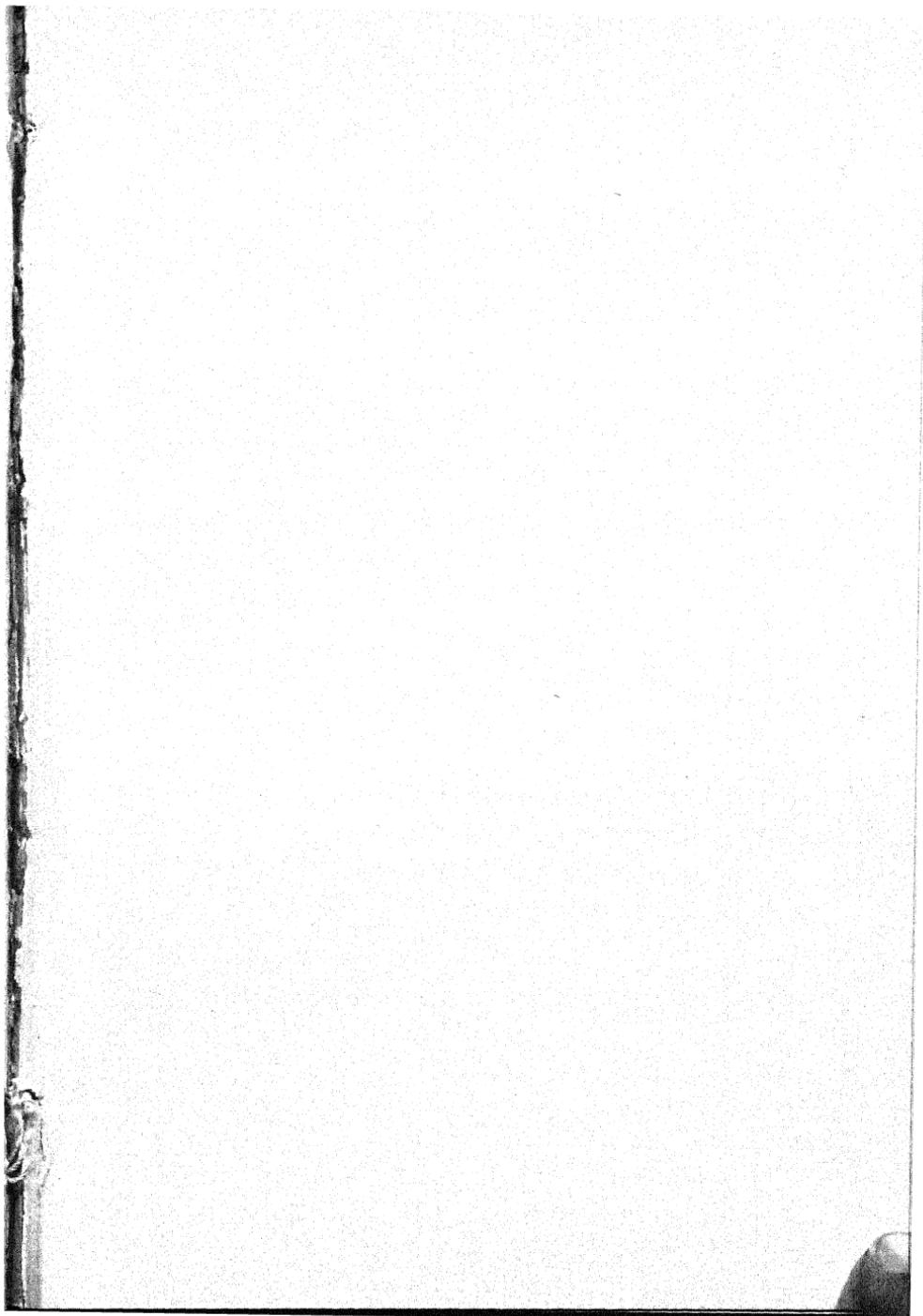
The Musulmān raids began at the close of the 10th century: the Mughal power was only firmly established in the time of Bābur (16th century). Islām contrasts with Hindūism, as a clear-cut monotheism, strongly opposed to all kinds of image worship, and even to the representation of living objects in works of art. In one aspect, Islām is fanatical and puri-

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tanical, and thus destructive of Hindū culture wherever possible: in another (Sūfiism), it closely approaches, and even fuses with, Hindū thought.

The Parsis, a small community of Zoroastrians settled in the west of India, have had no direct influence on the history of Indian art. But the Zoroastrian and Āryan mythologies go back to common origins.

Let us now discover the working out of the ideas of which the development has been already outlined. In the first place, almost all Hindū art (Brāhmanical and Mahāyāna Buddhist) is religious. "Even a misshapen image of a god," says Sukrāchārya (*ca.* 5th century A.D.) "is to be preferred to an image of a man, howsoever charming." Not only are images of men condemned, but originality, divergence from type, the expression of personal sentiment, are equally forbidden. "(An image made) according to rule (*shāstra*) is beautiful, no other forsooth is beautiful: some (deem) that beautiful which follows after (their own) fancy, but that not according to the rule (appears) unlovely to the discerning." The spirit of these uncompromising doctrines lies at the root of the Hindū view of art: these limitations and this discipline are the source of its power. Let us study its expression in a few concrete examples.





1. Shiva as cosmic dancer

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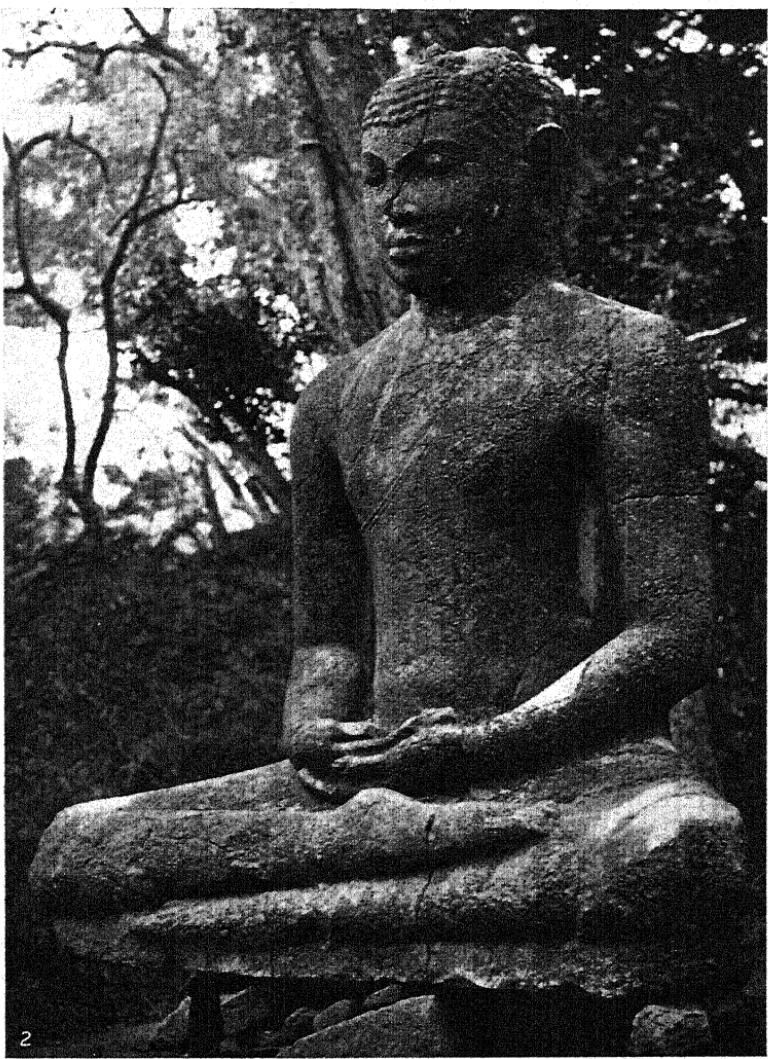
The Hindūs do not regard the religious, æsthetic, and scientific standpoints as necessarily conflicting, and in all their finest work, whether musical, literary, or plastic, these points of view, nowadays so sharply distinguished, are inseparably united.

This synthesis is nowhere better realised than in the image of Natarāja (fig. 1), "Lord of the Dance," a form of Shiva, as Overlord, *Ishvara*. From references to Natarāja in the contemporary hymns we learn the precise significance of the images, and gather that this significance must have been quite familiar to the imagers themselves and to the worshippers. In these images, Shiva has four arms; his braided locks whirl in the dance. Set in the hair are a cobra, a skull, a mermaid figure of the Ganges, and the crescent moon; in the right ear is a man's earring, in the left a woman's; one hand holds a drum, and another fire, while one is raised, and the fourth points to the lifted foot. The right foot is pressed upon a dwarf: from the lotus pedestal rises an encircling glory, fringed with flame, and touched by the hands holding drum and fire. The images are of all sizes, from a few inches to four feet in height: the splendid example illustrated is one of the largest. The interpretation of the dance is as follows: In the Night of Brahmā, Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Shiva wills it: He rises from

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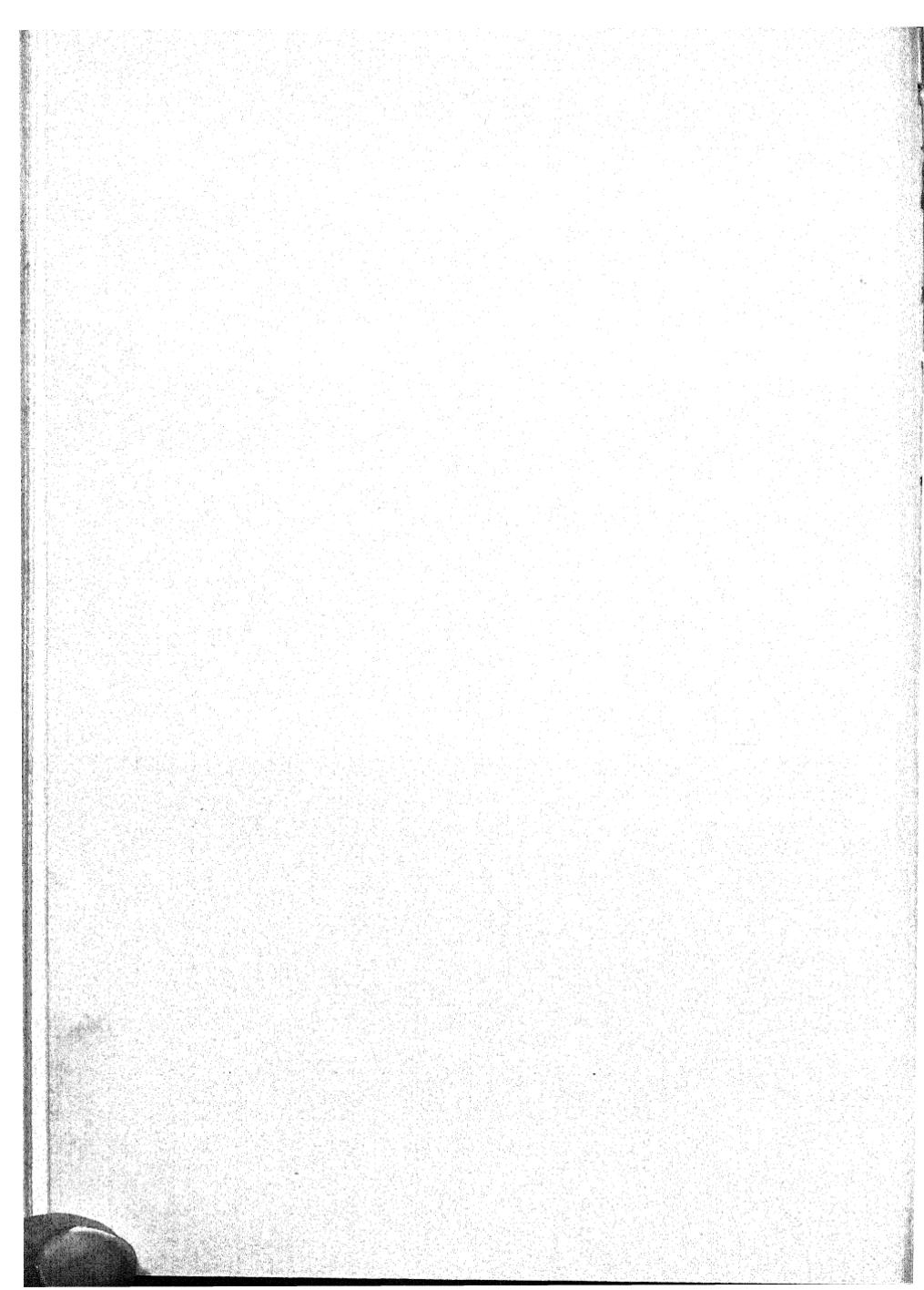
his stillness, and, dancing, sends through matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, proceeding from the drum: then Nature also dances, appearing about him as a glory (this glory, the *tiruvāsi*, is broken away from the example illustrated). Then in the fulness of time, still dancing, He destroys all Names and Forms by Fire, and there is new rest. Thus Time and the Timeless are reconciled by the conception of phase alternations extending over vast areas of space and great tracts of time. The orderly dance of the spheres, the perpetual movement of atoms, evolution and involution, are conceptions that have at all times recurred to men's minds; but to represent them in the visible form of Natarāja's Dance is a unique and magnificent achievement of the Indians.

If the dancing figure stands for evolution, the everlasting becoming, the *yogī* type of the seated Buddha (fig. 2) is an equally dramatic image of withdrawal, of complete independence, of involution. It is well to remember that this pose does not represent any sort of mortification of the flesh: it is simply that position which has been immemorially adopted by Indian thinkers, as most convenient for meditation, because the body remains self-supported without effort, and on the other hand without a tendency to sleep.



2

2. Buddha: the likeness of a Yogi as a flame that burns without movement



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How little this stillness is related to inertia appears in the familiar simile : " the likeness of the seated *yogī* is a lamp in a windless place that flickers not " (*Bhagavad Gītā*, vi. 19). It is just this likeness that we must look for in the Buddha image, and this only. For the Buddha statue was not intended to represent a man ; it was to be like the unwavering flame, an image of what all men could become, not the similitude of any apparition (*nirmānakāya*).

A like impersonality appears in the facial expression of all the finest Indian sculptures. These have sometimes been described as expressionless because they do not reflect the individual peculiarities which make up expression as we commonly conceive it. When, however, we " look to those qualities which in their literature were held up as the ideals of life " (Flinders Petrie, *The Arts and Crafts of Ancient Egypt*), we begin to understand the facial expression of Hindū images. This ideal is described in many places, typically, for example, in the *Bhagavad Gītā* xi. 12-19 : " Hateless toward all born beings, void of the thought of I and My, bearing indifferently pain and pleasure, before whom the world is not dismayed and who is not dismayed before the world; who rejoices not, grieves not, desires not; indifferent in honour and dishonour, heat and cold, joy and pain; free

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from attachment"—such an one is god-like, "dear to Me," says Krishna. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is also the chief gospel of action without attachment: change, says Krishna, is the law of life, therefore act according to duty, not clinging to any object of desire, but like the actor in a play, who knows that his mask (*persona-lity*) is not himself.

For this impassivity is not less characteristic of the faces of the gods in moments of ecstatic passion or destroying fury, than of the face of the stillest Buddha. In each, emotion is interior, and the features show no trace of it: only the movements or the stillness of the limbs express the immediate purpose of the actor. That it is "this body," not the inmost Self that acts, "that slayeth or is slain," is as clearly expressed in the Indian sculpture of the golden age, as anywhere in Vedic literature. This amazing serenity (*shānti*) in moments of deepest passion is not quite confined to Indian sculpture: something very like it, and more familiar to Western students, is found in the gracious and untroubled Mænad furies of the Greek vases, the irresponsible and sinless madness of the angry Bacchæ—

"Is it joy or terror, ye storm-swift feet?"

But how far away is this Indian and early Greek calm from the violence of the *Laocoön* and from the mod-

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ern concept of the "man of action"! It is a far journey from the art of personality and self-expression, to the art that reveals a Self not involved in any of its transient empirical activities, howsoever noble or base in outward seeming.

I do not mean to say that all these deep thoughts were consciously expressed by every craftsman; certainly not when tradition had become a mere habit. But, to adapt slightly the words of Nietzsche, those who first uttered these thoughts in stone or metal, and some of those who came after them, knew as well as the wisest ones about the secret of life. The view of life that irradiated the whole mental atmosphere of India could not be absent from her art; if we realise this, we must become aware that to seek for a likeness to men, or the expression of transient sentiment, in Indian art, is merely to seek for its weak moments.

Images such as the dancing Shiva or the seated Buddha are the work of a school, not of anyone artist. All essential details are passed on from father to son in pupillary succession through successive generations, the medium of transmission consisting of example, exact formulas in Sanskrit verse, and diagrammatic sketches. Thus during many centuries the artists of one district apply themselves to the inter-

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pretation of the same ideas; the origin of those ideas is more remote than any particular example. The great types are the fruit of communal rather than individual thought. This communal thought, however, is not only popular thought, but that of the greatest and wisest minds of successive generations seeking to impress their vision on a whole race.

There is no more remarkable illustration of the Hindū perception of the relative insignificance of the individual personality, than the fact that we scarcely know the name of a single painter or sculptor of the great periods: while it was a regular custom of authors to ascribe their work to better-known authors, in order to give a greater authority to the ideas they set forth. The absence of names in the history of Indian art is a great advantage to the historian of art; for he is forced to concentrate all his attention upon their work, and its relation to life and thought as a whole, while all temptation to anecdotal criticism is removed.

When such types become stereotyped, or the individual craftsman is a poor artist, the æsthetic value of any particular image is proportionately lessened. But experience proves that for most of the innocent, religious significance is scarcely reduced by the æsthetic decadence of a declining style or the crude

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technique of one yet undeveloped : while the mere symbols can be limited to almost algebraic baldness without losing their meaning for the learned. Moreover, even those who are most sensitive to beauty, when they stand before such an image, "even if somewhat misshapen," are able, in proportion to their own intensity of imagination, to clothe it with life, and to see beyond what has been accomplished to what was originally meant. The one person to whom the somewhat misshapen image makes no appeal is neither the devotee, nor the philosopher, nor the artist, but the sentimentalist who looks upon the sensuous gratifications—the subject beauty—of art as an end instead of a means; he alone prefers a pretty personality to an awkward divinity.

Now suppose in place of a great tradition imposed on generations of craftsmen of diverse rank, we imagine an art of originality, depending on the expression of personal and transient emotion. We should still obtain from time to time the works of individual genius, but these, uttered in various separate idioms, would by no means secure from the spectator that response which is the birthright of all works inspired by a living tradition. Secular and personal art can only appeal to cliques: but a hieratic art unites a whole race in one spiritual feudalism. Meanwhile, the in-

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ferior craftsmen, who in any case would produce inferior versions of the great motifs, if thrown wholly upon their own resources, would also come short in science and in devotion, and produce works not merely æsthetically worthless, but altogether worthless. This is, in fact, the diagnosis of the shortcoming of all our modern individualistic art, that seven-eighths of it is the work of men who ought to be servants, and not masters : while the work of the one-eighth (if there be so large a proportion of genius) is necessarily intelligible only to a very small audience.

Yet there is one fatal weakness of the later phases of a traditional art: it has no power to resist the corruption from without. It is beautiful by habit rather than intention, so that a single generation under changed conditions is sufficient to destroy it. The caste system and the hieratic sanctions of Indian design have protected Indian handicraft for a time : but it would be useless to pretend that these handicrafts, for all their splendour and devotion, any longer represent the thought and feeling of new India. Ninety-nine of a hundred university-educated Indians are perfectly indifferent to them. The overwhelming desire of modern India is to be like modern Europe: it will be many weary centuries before her people are once again of one mind, or have so clear a vision of life

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as is expressed in the great creative art of the 7th and 8th centuries.

The Indian imager approached his work with great solemnity, invoking the god whom he would represent. In the *Agni Purāna*, he is told, the night before undertaking a great work, to pray: "O thou Lord of all gods, teach me in dreams how to carry out all the work I have in my mind." He is inspired by *Vishvakarmā*. We have already seen that many of the *Hindū* and Buddhist divinities are deified charms: ordinary methods of personal worship of an *Ishta Devatā* involve the repetition of these charms, and a deliberate process of visualisation or imagination. In the same way the artist, or magician (*Sādhaka*) as he is sometimes called (an idea recalling the *yoga māyā* or magic of illusion by which *Īshvara* creates the world), is required after various purificatory rites, physical and mental, to invoke and visualise and finally to identify himself completely in thought with the divinity to be represented. He thus acts on the principle of the saying, "*Devo bhutwā, devam yajet*"— "By becoming the god, one should worship the god." This identification of subject with object is the chief aim of the *yoga* (union) philosophy: it is certainly a prerequisite for the most perfect art, for none can really know what appears external to himself. Were

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it possible to find any true short way to art, it would surely be this, that the artist must identify himself with his subject; it should be an insult to credit him with observation, for to observe implies a separation from that which is observed. It is likewise a test of art, that it should enable the spectator to forget himself, and to become its subject, as he does in dreams. But this method is not really a short one. "Only when I was seventy-three," says Hokusai, "had I got some sort of insight into the real structure of nature . . . at the age of eighty I shall have advanced still further; at ninety, I shall grasp the mystery of things ; at a hundred, I shall be a marvel, and at a hundred and ten every blot, every line from my brush shall be alive."

It is not, of course, to be supposed that every minor craftsman always followed out the ritual prescribed for the artist, or that the ritual never degenerated into a mere formula: but the theory no doubt actually represents the mental attitude of those who first saw the great motifs, as truly as it represents the position of those who heard the *Vedas*. All these, sculptors, poets, or singers, desired to make themselves a channel for the passage of ideas from a divine world to this physical earth, and all equally regarded personal and discrete intellectual activity as incompatible with the apprehension of remote truth.

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This process of intuition, setting aside one's personal thought in order to see or hear, is the exact reverse of the modern theory which considers a conscious self-expression as the proper aim of art. It is hardly to be wondered at that the hieratic art of the Indians, as of the Egyptians, thus static and impersonal, should remain somewhat unapproachable to a purely secular consciousness.

Symbolism is the language of hieratic art, in which one poet may sing gloriously, and another may only stammer. The symbols of hieratic art range from the "natural" to the "arbitrary," with all transitions: some will explain themselves at once, like onomatopoetic words in any language, while it may be as impossible to translate the full significance of others as to find a full English rendering for every single word of a written language equally rich in association. The important fact about these symbols or conventions, of whatever sort, is that they were the accepted medium of communication between artist and spectator: they were taken for granted, and we can hardly expect to fully enter into the spirit of the art ourselves, unless we also learn to take for granted a few of its constantly recurring phrases. Space will only permit of reference to two types of symbolism in Hindū art : the lotus (water lily), and the *mudrās* (positions

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of the hands). Such symbols belong to the category of things taken for granted by the artist, and it is only because we conceive them pedantically that we fail to realise how easy it was to endow them with life.

Countless human and racial associations gather about the lotus: its delicate blossoms are the glory of every bathing pool and lake, while in literature the eyes of every beautiful woman or man are likened to its flowers, and these flowers, closing at night and imprisoning the bees, are the constant subject of other poetic metaphors. Growing in the mud, and yet so clean, the lotus is a symbol of purity: a lotus-pool, with leaves and flowers in bud, widely opened, and again dying down, is an image of the ebb and flow of human life (*samsāra*). Bodily centres of consciousness, such as the solar plexus, the heart and the brain, are represented in lotus forms, while the whole universe is sometimes imagined as one great flower whose petals are outlined by the starry worlds: in this last sense, probably, we should understand the flower held in the hand of Avalokiteshvara and other deities, the flowers offered by the *gopīs* to Krishna, and those offered in daily worship. Most important, however, in art, is the representation of a lotus flower as the seat of a god, or beneath the feet of a standing figure of a god, a convention representing the

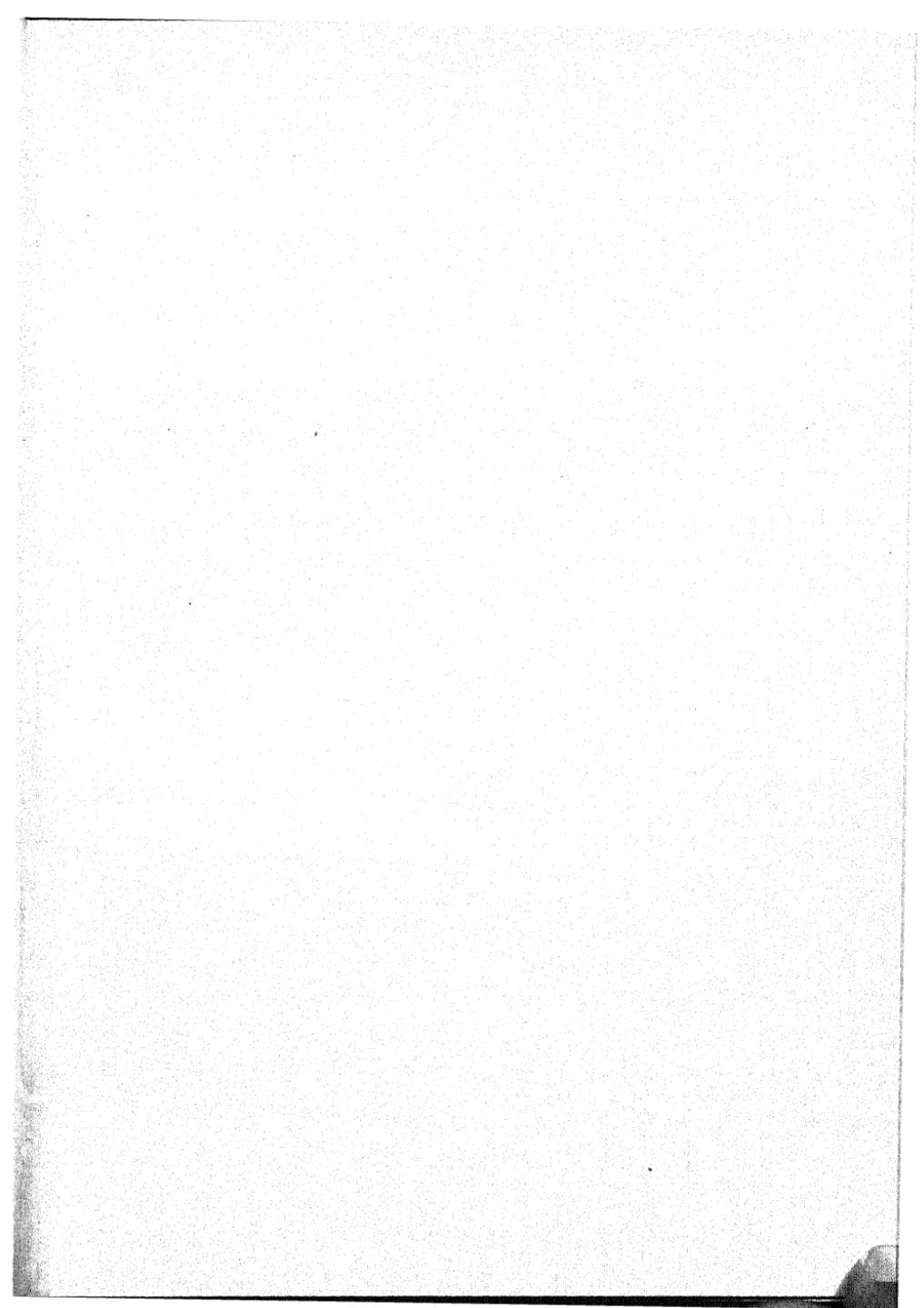
## CHARACTER AND HISTORY

fact that the feet of the gods do not rest on the earth. The lotus pedestal, like other godly attributes, is thus in the proper sense true: for the types of divine images go back ultimately to the visions and dreams of saints, for whom this lightness has always been a matter of experience. This truth is wholly destroyed when, in some quite modern pictures in a would-be European manner, the lotus-throne is represented realistically: at once the divinity grows heavy, and we are led to inquire why the lotus petals are not crushed, and why its slender stalk remains unbent.

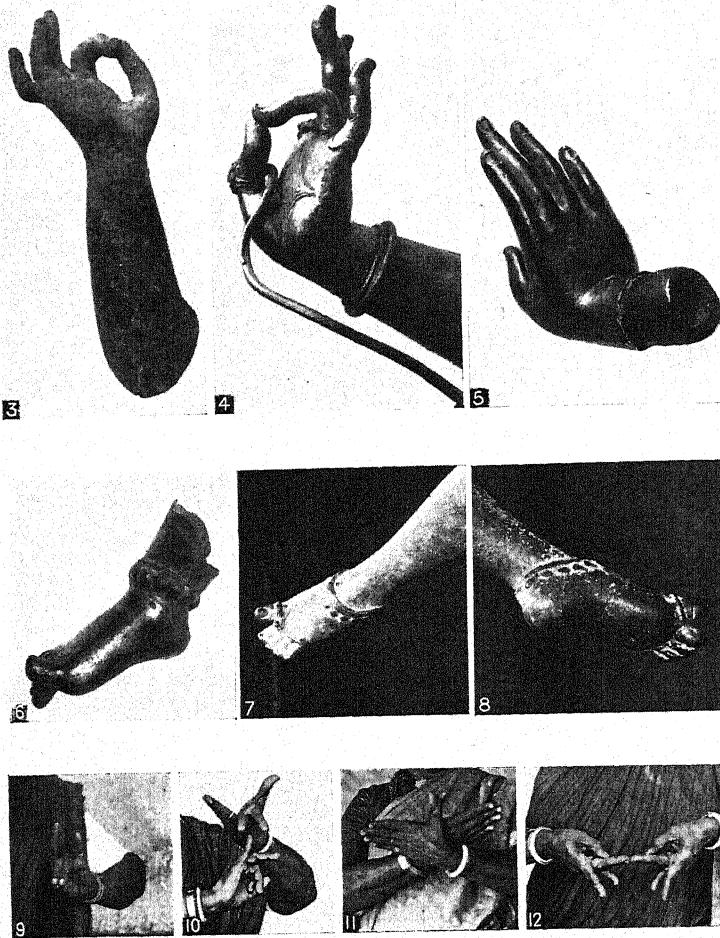
In Indian images, great significance is to be attached to gesture: a part of this is very obvious, as appears if we contrast the stillness of a Buddha with the fluidity of Natarāja. This gesture symbolism derives directly from life; the seated Buddha posture, for example, is that of greatest repose and stability, and is adopted to this day by all those who meditate. The gods are of human imaging. Shiva is "Thou that dost take the forms imagined by Thy worshippers": but these forms again react upon life, so that when we take our way to the *ghāts* at Benares and mark the stillness and grace of those who bathe and pray, we have before us both cause and effect. But the poses of art, especially those of the hands, called *mudrās*, may not always explain themselves at once

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to one who has never seen them in life. To take concrete examples, the right hand of fig. 28 is in *vitarka mudrā*, indicating argument or discourse; the nearer right hand of fig. 1, the right hand of fig. 35, and the detached hand of fig. 5, are in *abhaya mudrā*, indicating "do not fear"; the hands of fig. 24 are in the *dharma-cakra mudrā*, "turning the wheel of the Law"; the pose of fig. 31 is known as *mahārāja-lilā-āsana*, "pose of kingly ease." The three most usual variations of the seated Buddha or yogī type are (1) with the hands folded in the lap, in *dhyāni mudrā*, "meditation" (fig. 2); (2) the right hand raised in discourse (figs. 3, 4); and the right hand dropped over the knee to touch the earth (*bhūmishparsa mudrā*, "calling earth to witness"). A less formal treatment of the hands in other works is often no less eloquent; for example, the hand of Pārvatī laid on Shiva's arm (fig. 30); the offering hands of Hanuman (fig. 49); the praying hands of the *nāginīs* (fig. 70); the singer's fingers (fig. 71); and the dancing feet of Shiva (figs. 6-8). Such hands and limbs of Indian images reflect the Indian physical type in their smoothness and flexibility, and the nervousness of their vitality. There, every separate finger, whether motionless or moving, is alive; while it is one of the clearest signs of decadence and reduced intensity of realisation,



HANDS AND FEET



3, 4. *Vitarka mudrā* 5. *Abhaya mudrā* 6-8. Feet of dancing figures  
9-12. Hands of a dancing-girl: 9, A deer; 10, Raising of Mt. Govardhan;  
11, Garuda (a bird); 12, A bed with four legs

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when the fingers become either stiff or flabby, or disposed exactly in one plane.

Beside the seated forms already noticed, there are not less characteristic standing poses. Some severe types are perfectly symmetrical (figs. 27, 51); but more frequent, and capable of greater variation, is the stance, well seen in fig. 57, where the weight of the body rests on one leg and the other is slightly bent. Images of the latter type are called *trivanka*, because the median line, in front view, is thrice curved. A variety of this with legs crossed is frequently adopted in the representations of Krishna as flute-player (figs. 58, 132). From such forms, again, there are all transitions to the continuous movement and perfect fluidity of the dancers (fig. 1, etc.). If any power in Indian art is really unique, it is its marvellous representation of movement—for here in the movement of the limbs is given the swiftness and necessity of the impelling thought itself, much more than a history of action subsequent to thought.

There is a close connection between sculpture and dancing; not merely inasmuch as certain images represent dancing gods (Shiva, Krishna, etc.), but because the Indian art of dancing is primarily one of gesture, in which the hands play a most important part. The special symbolism of hands (*mudrā*) has

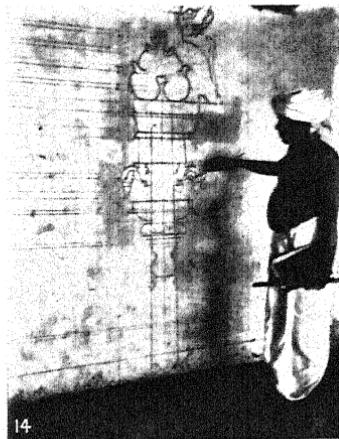
## ARTS & CRAFTS OF INDIA & CEYLON

been already alluded to (p. 29); but only a complete knowledge of the language of dance gesture would prepare the student to fully interpret the sculptures (*cf.* figs. 1, 50). Four positions of the hands photographed from a bayadère of Tanjore are given here as examples, the figs. 9-12 signifying respectively a deer, Krishna's raising Mount Govardhan, Vishnu's Garuda, and a bed. By means of this concrete gesture language the dancer is enabled to give long descriptions of the gods, especially the incarnations of Vishnu, and to express every possible sentiment (*rasa*).

A few words may be added here about the status of the craftsman. In Vedic times, the *rishis* themselves are represented as preparing the sacrificial posts and altars; in Asoka's day, those who injured the royal craftsmen were liable to the punishment of death; while it has been a constant feature of Indian civilisation, as of all aristocratic and theocratic cultures, that the craftsmen should be endowed, receiving either royal or ecclesiastical patronage. Craftsmanship, like learning, being thus protected, and the craftsman holding an assured and hereditary position, can alone make possible the association with work of that leisure and affection which distinguish all the finest handicraft.



13

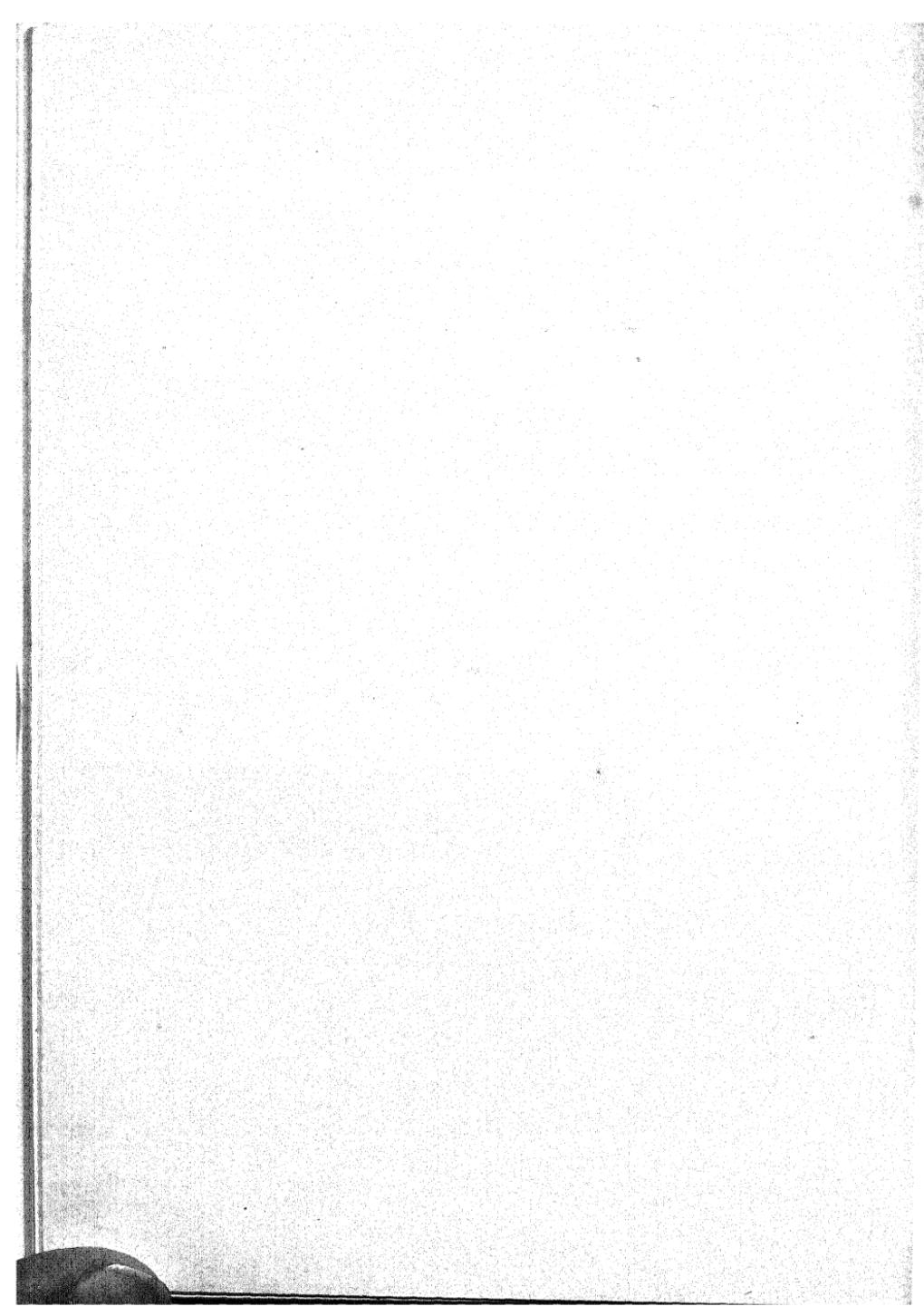


14



15

13. Jewellers 14. An architect 15. Weavers arranging a warp



## CHARACTER AND HISTORY

The practice of the arts has usually been confined to the members of hereditary castes. The higher Hindū and Sinhalese artificers trace their descent from Vishvakarmā : to this day they style themselves Vishvabrahmans, employ priests of their own caste, and claim spiritual equality with Brāhmans. All craftsmen regard their art as a mystery, and look upon its traditions, handed down in pupillary succession, as invested with sacred and scriptural authority. In connection with the consecration of images, the higher craftsmen themselves exercise sacerdotal functions.

The importance attached to craftsmanship, and the picture of the ideal craftsman, may be gathered from the following characteristic extracts from a *Shilpashāstra* :

“That any other than a *Shilpan* should build temples, towns, seaports, tanks, or wells, is comparable to the sin of murder.

“The *Shilpan* should understand the *Atharva Veda*, the 32 *Shilpashāstras*, and the Vedic *mantras* by which the deities are invoked.

“The *Shilpan* should be one who wears a sacred thread, a necklace of sacred beads, and a ring of *kusha* grass upon his finger : one delighting in the worship of God, faithful to his wife, avoiding strange women,

## ARTS & CRAFTS OF INDIA & CEYLON

true to his family, of a pure heart and virtuous, chanting the *Vedas*, constant in the performance of ceremonial duties, piously acquiring a knowledge of various sciences—such a one is indeed a Craftsman."

We are also told that expert and honest craftsmen and architects will be reborn in royal or noble families: but those who work amiss will fall into hell, and shall return to future lives of poverty and hardship.

It is noteworthy that in many crafts the final product is a result of the division of labour. The craftsman is not often his own designer. The cotton printers and embroiderers do not make their own wood blocks: the painter draws on the cloth or metal the necessary outlines for the Chambā embroiderer or the Ceylon damascener. Brocade patterns are not designed by the actual weavers. The Jaipure enamels are the work of at least five persons—designer, goldsmith, engraver, maker of the enamel, and enameller. Where there is no recourse to an "artist," it will be found that most of the designs are traditionally inherited, and so constant as to be familiar to every workman, and there is little to distinguish the work of one man from another. But the designer is always familiar with the conditions of the craft; there is no division of labour akin to the industrial distinction and separation of the artist from the craftsman. In

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many cases also it happens that the best men are at once designers and themselves skilled in many crafts: in Ceylon, for example, the same man may be at once an architect, jeweller, painter, and ivory carver.

Already in the time of Buddha the craftsmen were organised in guilds (*sreni*), the number of which is often given as eighteen. In northern India at the present day there are also guilds of Musulmān craftsmen, such as that of the Benares brocade weavers; but the tendency since Mughal times has been for the Hindū workmen to predominate.

We must now return from the actual craftsman to a very brief discussion of political history, in so far as it can form the basis of a classification of schools of art. After Buddha (*d. 483 B.C.*) the next great landmarks of Indian history are Alexander's raid (*327 B.C.*), the reign of Chandragupta Maurya at Pātaliputra (*321-297 B.C.*), and the reign of his grandson Asoka, "Beloved of the Gods" (*272-235 B.C.*). In Asoka's time Buddhism was still essentially a system of rationalistic morality, though already with traces of metaphysical and theological development. To this system Asoka became a convert, and first made of Buddhism a state religion. He also sent missionaries throughout India and to Ceylon, and even to Europe and Africa. Within his own dominions (all India

## ARTS & CRAFTS OF INDIA & CEYLON

except the extreme south) he set up a number of stone pillars inscribed with edicts enjoining the practice of the Buddhist morality, but without antagonism to other beliefs.

After Asoka, princes of Greek descent occupied Afghanistan and the country west of the Indus. Asiatic tribes known as Sakas and Kushans then replaced these and invaded and occupied the north-west of India, remaining in power during the first three centuries after Christ. Kanishka's capital (*ca.* 78 A.D.) was at Peshawar. These "Indo-Scythians" were thoroughgoing Buddhists and patronised a prolific sculpture and architecture based on Roman and late Greek models. The mystic and theological development of Mahayana Buddhism was now almost complete.

The next great dynasty was that of the Guptas (320-480 A.D.), whose capital was again at Pataliputra. Their empire extended across northern India from Kathiawar to Bengal. During this period and succeeding centuries, many "White Huns" from Central Asia invaded India and settled in Rajputana and the Panjab, where they were completely Hinduised, and became Rajputs.

Our intimate knowledge of the Guptas is largely due to the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-Hien (tra-

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velled 399-413 A.D.), who lived for six years at Pātaliputra. The Guptas were themselves Vaishnava Hindus, but favoured the Buddhists, and Fa-Hien describes the two cults as flourishing side by side.

The Guptas were followed by Harshavardhana (606-648 A.D.), and his contemporary Pulakesin in the Deccan. In his reign Hiouen Tsang (travelled 629-645 A.D.), another Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, journeyed all over India, and wrote an invaluable account of what he saw. Harshavardhana patronised all sects, particularly the Shaivites, Sauras, and Buddhists.

The 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries (Guptas and Harsha) cover the most brilliant period of classic Sanskrit literature and Hindu learning generally; this was the flowering time of the Hindu renaissance. The epics had already been completed. Drama reached its zenith in Kālidāsa (5th century), and for theory, in Bharata; while this was no doubt also the golden age of Indian music. Bāna in the 7th century describes a court life exactly like that represented in the contemporary paintings of Ajantā. The *Shilpa-shāstras* and other encyclopædic works may also be assigned to the Gupta period, rather earlier than later. This was also the chief scientific period of Hinduism, covering the lives of the three greatest of Indian as-

## ARTS & CRAFTS OF INDIA & CEYLON

tronomers. Buddhism meanwhile gradually declined, except locally in Bengal, Nepāl, and Ceylon, absorbed rather than ousted by Hindūism. This was also an age of maritime activity, shown, for example, in the colonisation of Jāva. The Gupta and Harsha period was also one of profound Indian influence upon China, and, somewhat later, Japan. At this time India was the dynamic centre of all Asia and the first civilised power in the whole world.

After Harsha, Northern India was divided into various Rājput kingdoms; this Rājput period lasted till the 12th century, and in areas not overwhelmed by the Muhammadans, viz. in Rājputāna and the Pānjab Himālayas, it continues to the present day. Other Hindū dynasties (Chalukyas, Hoysalas, etc.) occupied the Deccan; while Buddhist kingdoms were maintained in Bengal and Orissa till the 12th century. In the far south (Drāvida) three ancient kingdoms, the Chola, Chera, and Pāndava, maintained an old and independent civilisation distinguished in literary achievement and seaborne trade with Europe and the far East. Southern India is without doubt the Biblical "Ophir."

The chief landmarks of the history of Ceylon are the conversion to Buddhism by Asoka's missionaries (B.C. 307): the capital at Anurādhapura up to the

## CHARACTER AND HISTORY

8th century: at Polonnāruva from the 8th to the 13th century: at Kandy from the 16th century: and the British occupation in 1815. It should be noted that the distinctively Sinhalese (Buddhist) art is the Kandyan art of the interior: the art of Jaffna belongs to that of Southern India, while that of the low country during the last three centuries has been one-third European.

The Musulmān occupation of India falls into two periods, first, the destructive phase, 1000 to 1506 A.D., and second, the Mughal Empire, 1506 to 1761 A.D. The Muhammadans at one time or another overran nearly all India except Travancore and Nepāl. The southern Hindū kingdom of Vijayanagar successfully held its own from its rise in the 14th century till its fall in 1565: while the Marattas successfully established their independence in the 18th century, when Mughal power was rapidly declining. The British period is generally held to begin with the year 1761.

Lack of space prohibits any detailed discussion of the foreign elements in Indian art. The most ancient part of this art belongs to the common endowment of "Early Asiatic" culture which once extended from the Mediterranean to China, and as far south as Ceylon, where some of the most archaic motifs sur-

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vive in the decoration of pottery. To this Mykenean facies belong all the simpler arts of woodwork, weaving, metal-work, pottery, etc., together with a group of designs including many of a remarkably Mediterranean aspect, others more likely originating in Western Asia. The wide extension and consistency of this culture throughout Asia in the second millennium B.C. throws important light on ancient trade intercourse, at a time when the Eastern Mediterranean formed the Western boundary of the civilised world.

Much later in origin are the definite Assyrianisms and Persian elements in the Asokan and early Buddhist sculpture, such as the bell-capital and winged lions. Alexander's raid in 327 B.C. left no permanent effects of any sort on Indian culture; but Greek influences are strong in the first three or four centuries A.D., in the north (Panjab, Mathurā, and Nepāl). The 6th and 7th centuries are the creative and most independent age of classic Indian art, which culminates in the 8th.

Saracenic influences increase from the time of Mahmūd Ghazni's first raid in 1000 A.D. up to the 17th century (extending even to Jāva, conquered in 1488 A.D.), while Hindū and Buddhist art in Nepāl, Orissa, Southern India, and Ceylon, were almost un-

## CHARACTER AND HISTORY

affected. European influences, chiefly on painting, are clearly distinguishable from the close of the 16th century; in the south and west there is a definite Indo-Portuguese style of wood and metal work. The full destructive force of Western industrialism has not been felt till after 1850: the modern Swadeshi movement, for the revival of Indian manufactures, is but little concerned with handicraft or happiness.

The schools of styles of Indian art as known by actual remains may be classified as follows :

**EARLY BUDDHIST**, B.C. 300 to 50 A.D.: pillar edicts, Sānchī and Mahābodhi stūpas and railings (all Asokan, 3rd century B.C.); Mathurā fragments; Amarāvatī and Bharhut stūpa, and Sānchī gates (2nd century B.C.).

**KUSHĀN OR GRÆCO-BUDDHIST**, 50 to 320 A.D.: Gandhāra sculptures of the Afghanistān frontier; sculpture at Mathurā; architecture at Gandhāra, and later in Kāshmīr (Mārtand, 8th century): Mahābodhi great temple (ca. 140 A.D.): Besnagar *garuda* pillar; transition of Early Buddhist to Gupta at Amarāvatī (railing, 150 to 200 A.D.); early painting at Ajantā and in Orissa.

**GUPTA**, 320 to 600 A.D.: sculpture and architecture (stūpa, etc.), at Sārnāth; at Anurādh-

## ARTS & CRAFTS OF INDIA & CEYLON

pura (2nd century B.C. to 9th century A.D.); sculpture and painting at Ajantā; painting and secular architecture at Sigiriya (Ceylon, 5th century).

CLASSIC INDIAN, 600 to 850 A.D., but especially the 8th century: latest and best painting at Ajantā; sculpture and architecture at Ellūra, Elephanta, Māmallapuram, Anurādhapura and Borobudur (Jāva).

MEDIÆVAL, 9th to 18th century (surviving in Ceylon, Travancore, Rājputāna, etc., up to the British period, and in Nepāl to the present day): Shaivite bronzes (Natarāja, etc.); sculpture and architecture of Tanjore (10th to 12th century), Vijayanagar (14th to 16th century), Madura (17th century), Auvadaiyār Kovil, Tārpatri (16th century), Perūr, Srīrangam, Rāmesvaram, etc.; Chalukyan architecture of Mysore, etc. (Belūr, Halebīd, 12th to 13th century); sculpture and architecture in Jāva up to 14th century, in Cambodia to the 12th; Polonnāruva sculpture and architecture (8th to 13th century), Kandy (16th to 18th century); Jain temples at Ābū (11th to 13th century), Orissa (Bhuvaneshvar, Konārak, Purī, 9th to 13th century), Khaj-

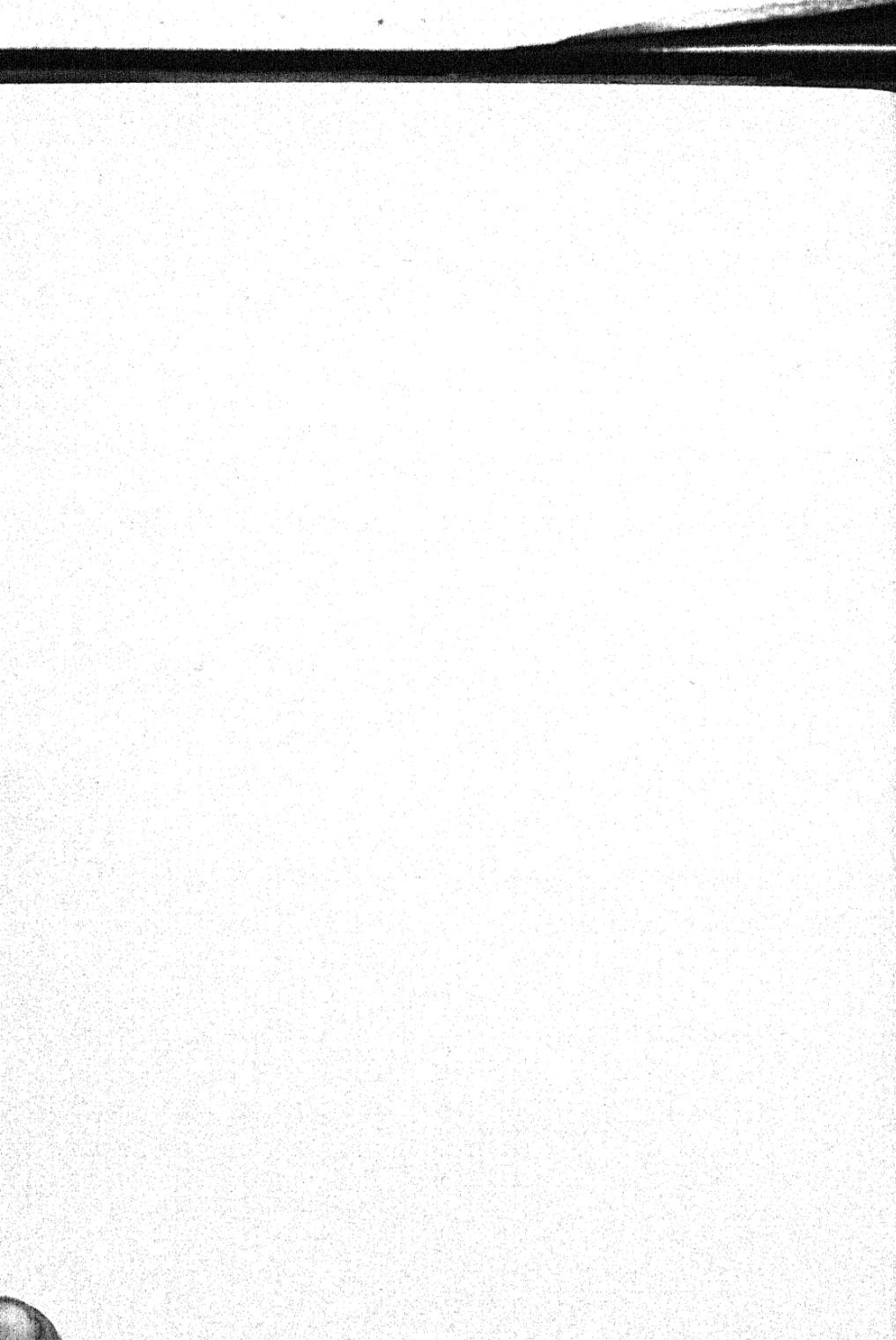
## CHARACTER AND HISTORY

urāho (*ca.* 1000 A.D.); Rājput painting and architecture (up to 19th century); Mughal painting and architecture (16th to 18th century); Nepalese Buddhist bronzes; art of Burma and Siam.

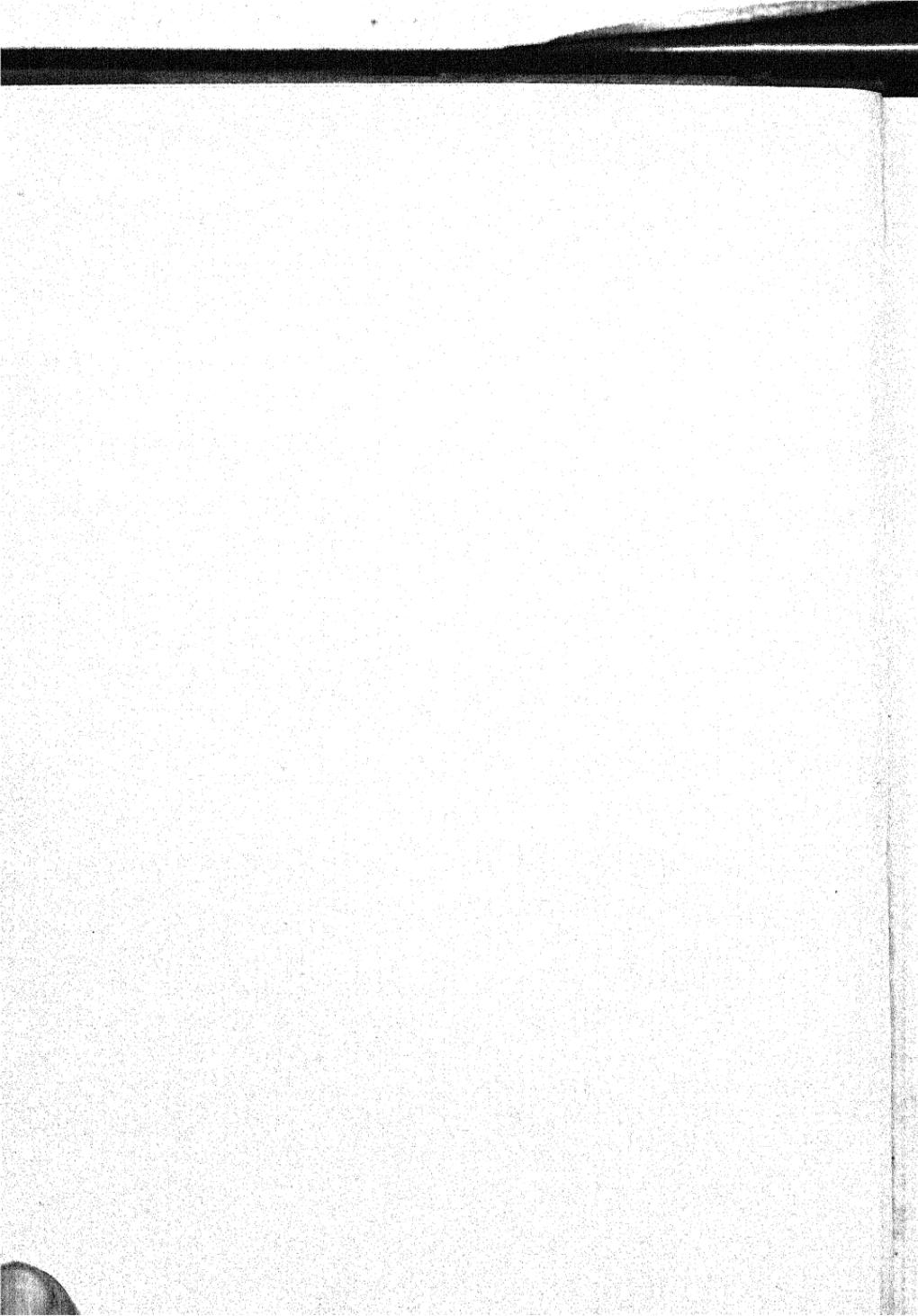
BRITISH, 1760— : decline of crafts; survival of architecture; school-of-art painting; *swadeshi*; modern Bengālī painting.



*Hamsa* : Tanjore drawing,  
20th century.



CHAPTER TWO  
SCULPTURE



## CHAPTER SECOND

## SCULPTURE

INDIAN SCULPTURE, WHICH EXISTS in bewildering variety and quantity, has never been systematically studied. For want of space we shall not attempt there anything like a detailed history, but rather take certain leading types and endeavour to investigate their psychology and to describe their main stylistic peculiarities.

At the outset we are faced with a problem which arises also in connection with the architecture, viz., the lack of evidence regarding the origins of an art that is already highly evolved when we meet with its first monuments in stone. The solution, as in the case of architecture, is to be found in the early use of impermanent materials—clay, stucco, wood: and also, perhaps, in the destruction of images made in precious metal, like the golden image of Sītā mentioned in the *Rāmāyana*. Abundant references and remains exist to show that such perishable materials were continuously made use of from the beginning up to modern times; for example, temporary images of mud are made at the present day, such as the great figure of Bhīma at Benares, annually swept away by the Ganges floods and annually renewed; or, again, the painted mud images made for *bali* ceremonies in Ceylon. Analogous also to these survivals are children's dolls (even the realistic terra-cotta figures of

## ARTS & CRAFTS OF INDIA & CEYLON

Lucknow), puppet-shows, and actors' masks.

Early Buddhism, as we have seen, is strictly rationalistic, and could no more have inspired a metaphysical art than the debates of a modern ethical society could become poetry. The early Sūtras, indeed, expressly condemn the arts, inasmuch as "form, sound, taste, smell, touch, intoxicate beings." It is thus fairly evident that before Buddhism developed into a popular State religion (under Asoka) there can hardly have existed any "Buddhist art." But Buddha never denied the existence of the Brāhmanical gods, he merely emphasised the view that these gods formed part of the *samsāra* and stood in need of salvation as much as men ; and there is every reason to suppose that the Buddhist laity continued to follow already existing animistic cults, and to worship images of gods constructed of wood and clay.\* The most remarkable monuments of the 3rd century B.C. are the stone columns on which are inscribed the famous edicts of Asoka. The capital of one of these is illustrated in fig. 17. Already in Asoka's time there is much talk of the gods ; and though there is little stone sculpture of his date, other than the magnificent capitals of his inscribed pillars, we find at Bhar-

\* Hindū images were certainly in use as early as the 4th century B.C. (*Indian Antiquary*, 1909, pp. 145-149).

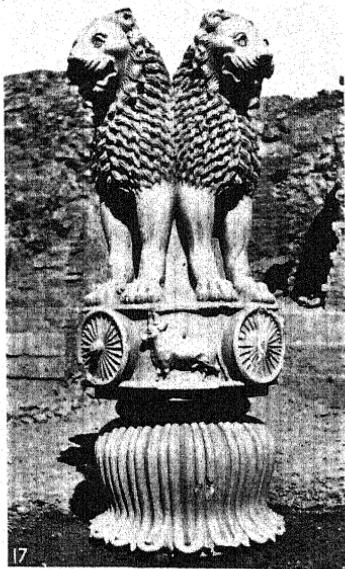
EARLY BUDDHIST SCULPTURE



16



18



17



19

16, 18. Impressions of seals  
19. Guardian *yaksha* 17. Capital of an Asoka column

EARLY BUDDHIST SCULPTURE



19A

19a. A Dryad, Sānchī

## SCULPTURE

hut, Sānchī, and Bodh Gayā, a century later, that Buddhism had already begun to organise a theology of its own. The principal members of this early Buddhist pantheon are the Guardians of the Four Quarters, represented as beneficent *yaksha* and *nāga* kings, and the Earth Goddess, represented as a *yakshī*. These forms are carved in low relief on the sides of the stone pillars of the gateways of the railings at Bharhut (fig. 19); but there are damaged remnants of similar figures in the round from Mathurā, Besnagar, and from Patna (Pātaliputra). Another instance of sculpture in the round is afforded by the beautiful bracket figures of the Sānchī gates (figs. 19a and 79)—dryads, leaning outwards from the trees of their habitation, with fearless and unaffected grace. Beside these figures of gods and men, we find at Bharhut and Sānchī a quantity of narrative sculpture illustrating the Jātakas and episodes in the last life of Buddha; these scenes are represented on carved medallions at Bharhut, and on the gateway pillars at Sānchī. There are also fine seals from Ceylon (fig. 16) and Bhītā (fig. 18); the latter, a terra-cotta impression, probably from an ivory die, resembles in design many of the railing medallions, but is of much finer workmanship. It is remarkable that the figure of Buddha is never indicated, but he is represented

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only by symbols such as the slippers, umbrella, or sacred tree.

The characteristics of this Early Buddhist style are the complete naturalism of its design, with a distinct element of sensuousness, its wood-carving technique, and the general absence of foreign influences, except in a few details. The representation of animals is excellent, but inferior to that in the Asokan sculpture of a century earlier.

The art of the Amarāvatī railing (figs. 22, 23) of the 2nd century A.D. (thus about 250 years later than Sānchī) is a logical development of the earlier style of Barhut and Sānchī, and so good that it was once held to mark "the culmination of the art of sculpture in India" (Fergusson). It offers "delightful studies of animal life, combined with extremely beautiful conventionalised ornament," and "the most varied and difficult movements of the human figure are drawn and modelled with great freedom and skill" (Havell). The well-known examples on the British Museum stairs suffer from the lack of the painted plaster surface which must once have covered the stone foundation. Most of the sculpture is still in low relief on medallions, plinth, and coping; over 16,000 square feet must once have been covered with sculptured reliefs. If there are any Hellenistic elements recog-

SCULPTURE OF GANDHĀRA AND AMARĀVATI



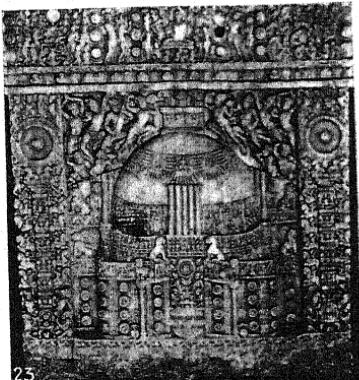
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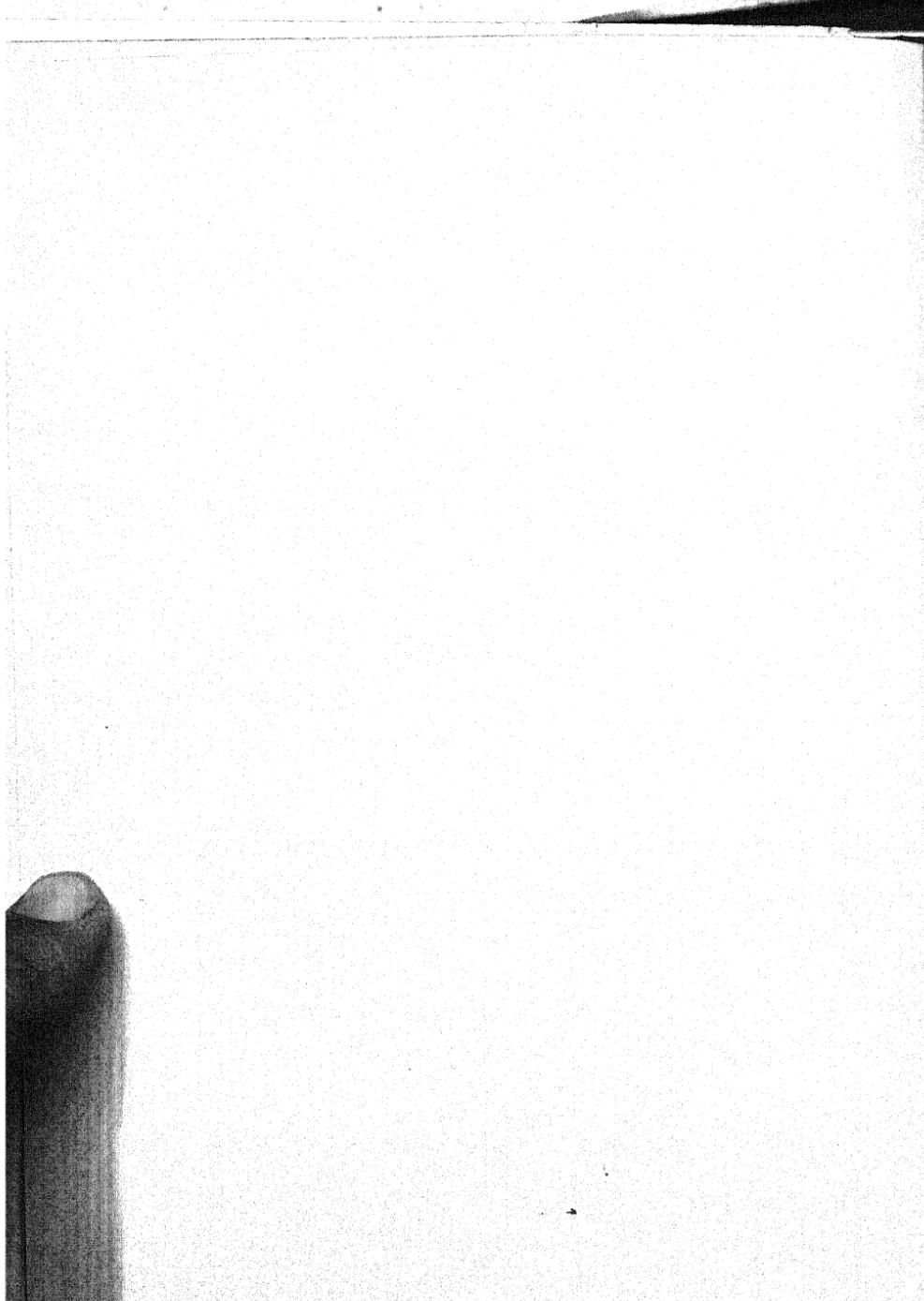


22



23

20. Buddha      21. Bodhisattva  
22. Elevation of the bowl-relic      23. A *stūpa*



## SCULPTURE

nisable in this southern work, their origin is more probably to be attributed to the sea-borne trade with Alexandria than to any communications with Bactria. The most important development in subject-matter appears in the representation of the Buddha, as a man, seated in *yogī* posture, meditating or teaching. There are also standing figures of Buddha, with formal and severe drapery. The figure sculpture shows some traces of a transition to the later Gupta style, but little of the subsequent idealism. As everywhere in Indian art, the chief decorative motif is the rose-lotus, and it is here treated very beautifully and richly in a rather realistic manner.

The sculpture of Anurādhapura in Ceylon, which is completely independent of the Bactrian influences, would be our best guide to the history of Indian art upto the classic period, had we already the more exact data which stylistic criticism may some day provide. As it is, it would appear that the most characteristic examples are in what would be called, in India, the Gupta style. The design of the earlier statues (fig. 27) very closely recalls the (pre-Gupta) Amarāvatī standing figures, and at the same time shows an approach to a later type in the transparent clinging drapery. Dignified as these figures are, the great Buddha (fig. 2) surpasses them in grandeur: there

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is no northern work of equal rank, though others in Ceylon are nearly as good. A nearer approach to the gracious movement of the classic type of Indian sculpture is found in some of the sculptured *dwārapālas*, the *nāga* door-guardians of the entrances to the Anurādhapura vihāras (fig. 25). Animal processions are represented on the beautiful carved moon-stone doorsteps, a form recalling the half-medallions of the Indian railings. A relief at Isurumuniya (fig. 26) resembles the love scenes of the Ajantā paintings. The Gupta style in continental India is likewise characterised by the suavity and fulness of its forms, and its closely clinging transparent draperies. The best examples are from Sārnāth (fig. 24) and Mathurā; the inscribed Buddha from Mānuwar; the bronze figures from Sultānganj (Bengal) and Buddhavāni (Kistna dist.) (fig. 3); and the cave sculptures from Besnagar (Bhopal), Ajantā, Bādāmī, and elsewhere. The beautiful Vadrāntapa seal, which may be dated on palaeographic grounds about 600, has details very like contemporary work at Ajantā, but the figure shows advanced tendencies in its very slender waist. It is possible that the Ceylon bronze figure of Pattini (British Museum), in which the slender waist is also much emphasised, is also as early as the 7th century.

We have so far left unmentioned the Græco-

GUPTA SCULPTURE



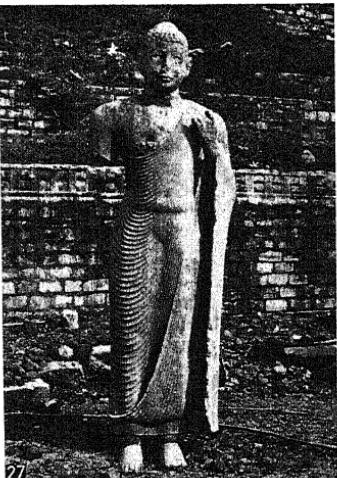
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25



26



27

24. Buddha      25. Guardian *nāga*  
26. Love scene      27. Buddha